Export of gold through MMTC.

108. SHRI SARADA MOHANTY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Mineral and Metal Trading Corporation (MMTC) has been dealing with the export of gold;

(b) whether MMTC has introduced a gold jewellary export scheme;

(c) if so, the details of that scheme; and

(d) the steps taken by MMTC in the above matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) No, Sir. MMTC does not export gold.

(b) to (d) MMTC Limited is one of the nominated agencies for supply of gold to the jewellery exporters in the country under various schemes mentioned in Chapter VIII, para 88 of the Export-Import Policy. MMTC provides gold and silver to the exporters and extends packing credit limits to enable its associates to manufacture and export jewellery. The export is carried out on MMTC's Account. The proceeds of the exports are realised by MMTC and after adjusting the packing credit provided and service charges, the balance is remitted to the jewellery manufacturer with a disclaimer certificate under Section 80 HHC of the Income-tax Act.

Dangerous and unsafe coal mines in Bihar

109. DR. BAPU KALDATE: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether operation of coal mafia in Jharia, Katras and Chirkunda continuous unabated in collusion with staff of Directorate of Mines Safety;

(b) the number of CBI raids made during the last one year in Dhanbad area and the number of officials oi the Directorate arrested in this regard; and

(c) whether Government propose to increase the staff strength of die Directorate to check operation of coal mafia in the area?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI P.A. SANGMA): (a) to (c) The Director-General of Mines Safety, Dhanbad is responsible for implementation of the provisions contained, among others, in the Mines Act, 1952 with a view to ensuring occupational safety and health of workers in Mines and not to check operation of coal mafia which is primarily the concern of the State Government. During the last one year two raids were made by CBI in which two officials of the Directorate were arrested on corruption charges.

Fresh sugar scandal

110. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether he had recently brought to the notice of the Prime Minister by writing about the new sugar scandal in the making and sought his intervention as reported in The Hindustan Times of 19th May, 1995; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) Consideration of policy issues is not a one time affair but a continuing process involving various levels/Ministries.

Demand to repeal prevention of black marketing and maintenance of supplies of essential Commodities Act, 1980

111. SHRI VIRENDRA KATARIA: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some Trade and Industry Associations have demanded repeal of Essential Commodities Act and the "Prevention of Black-Mar-

keting arid Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act", 1980;

(b) if so, the details of their demands; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) and (b) Some Trade & Industry Assocciation have demanded repeal of the Essential Commodities Act, 1995 on account of changed scenario of the production/supply of essential commodities. However, theer is no demand for repealing of Prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980

(c) It has been decided not to repeal the Act in the interest of the effective regulatory administration in the sphere of distribution of essential commodities in the community at this stage.

Availability of edible oils

112. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that despite import of edible oils, the availability of edible oils in the Public Distribution 'System (PDS) has not improved and there has been no relief in prices;

(b) whether Government would experiment with imposing levy procurement of edible oil from importers solely for distribution through PDS at affordable prices; and

(c) since oil seeds crops in Gujarat and elsewhere are threatened with late arrival of monsoons, what contingency measures are contemplated by the authorities to ensure continued supply of edible oils through PDB at stable prices?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) At present, only RBD Palmolein'is being supplied to the consumers through PDS. The State Trading Corporation (STC) is the sole canalysing agency nominated by Government for import of edible oils for the Public Distribution System (PDS). STC has been authorised to import 1.5 lakh tonnes of RBD Palmolein during the current financial year 1995-96 for PDS.

(c) The present availability position of imported RBD Palmolein in the country is comfortable. Allocation of imported edible oil is being made in favour of States/UTs on the basis of demand received. AH efforts are being made to meet the requirements of the States especially during the ensuing festival season. The prices of imported edible oil supplied through PDS have been kept lower than open market rates.

Rise in India's imports

113. SHRI RAJNI RANJAN SAHU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's imports have risen by 45.1% during the current year as compared to last year;

(b) if so, the reasons tehrefor; and

(c) the steps Government propose to take to reduce the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The import growth during April-May 1995, the latest period for which trade data are available, is estimated at 13.11% in dollar terms.

(b) POL imports during April-May, 1995 indicate an increase of about 16.7%. Non-POL imports estimated at US$ 4053.96 million registered an increase of 35.4%. The increase in non-POL imports is due to the economic recovery underway in the economy and the increase in export linked imports.

(c) One of the objectives of the current reform process is to import greater trans-